

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

AMEMBASSY SANA

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 108690

FOLLOWING REPEAT TEHRAN 3897 ACTION STATE INFO LONDON JIDDA APR 25.

QUOTE O N F I D E N T I A L TEHRAN 3897

EO 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, IR, UK

SUBJ: BRITISH VIEW OF SITUATION IN IRAN

REF: LONDON 6269 (NOTAL)

1. WE WERE INTERESTED BY ACCOUNT OF ASSISTANT SECRETARY SAUNDERS' DISCUSSIONS WITH FCO ASSISTANT UNDER SECRETARY WEIR AND DEPARTMENT HEAD LUCAS ON APRIL 18 REGARDING THE SITUATION IN IRAN. WE SHARE MOST OF THE PERCEPTIONS MENTIONED BY THE FCO OFFICIALS, BUT WOULD DIVERGE FROM THE OVER-ALL TONE COMMUNICATED PERHAPS AS A RESULT OF COMPRESSION IN RELATIVELY SHORT CONVERSATIONS.

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2. THE SHAH HAS REMARKED TO AMBASSADOR SULLIVAN AND ALSO PUBLICLY REGARDING HIS DETERMINATION TO PROCEED WITH HIS INTERNAL LIBERALIZATION PROGRAM. AS NOTED BY THE BRITISH THIS PRESENTS A NUMBER OF DIFFICULTIES AND DILEMMAS. WE HESITATE TO DRAW THE CONCLUSION THAT THE SHAH "HAS BEEN UNWILLING TO INTRODUCE GENUINE POLITICAL

INSTITUTIONS" SINCE WHAT IS "GENUINE" IN A PERSIAN CONTEXT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO IDENTIFY. IT IS HARD TO RECALL A PERIOD OF MODERN IRANIAN HISTORY WHEN SUCH POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS EXISTED AND WERE EFFECTIVE.

3. THE SHAH'S PROBLEM APPEARS TO US RATHER ONE OF PUSHING THE PROCESS OF CREATION OF MODERN INSTITUTIONS, WHILE PROTECTING HIS FLANKS FROM EXTREMISTS OF LEFT AND RIGHT AND MAINTAINING A VIABLE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CONSERVATIVE RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP WHICH HAS GREAT INFLUENCE WITH HIS PEOPLE. THERE IS AN ELEMENT OF "ACCIDENT" IN SOME OF THE COOPERATION CURRENTLY EXISTING BETWEEN RELIGIOUS AND OTHER (INTELLECTUAL LEFT WING) DISSIDENTS, BUT ACCIDENT IS HARDLY THE KEY ELEMENT. RATHER, WHAT WE ARE BEGINNING TO ANALYSE AS A BREAKDOWN OF COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN THE MODERNIZING ESTABLISHMENT AROUND THE SHAH AND THE RELIGIOUS CONSERVATIVES COULD LEAD TO SERIOUS INTERNAL INSTABILITY WHICH THE CONSERVATIVE MONARCHY WOULD CONSCIOUSLY SEEK TO CAPITALIZE ON. AS THE BRITISH SUGGEST, A GOOD DEAL OF THIS IS OF THE SHAH'S OWN MAKING, IF ONLY BECAUSE THE SERIOUS RELIGIOUS OUTBREAK AT GHOM IN JANUARY APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN TRIGGERED BY AN AWKWARD AND PERHAPS ILL-CONSIDERED NEWSPAPER ATTACK ON A RIGHT WING RELIGIOUS OPPONENT (AYATOLLAH KHOMEINI) IN THE PROCESS OF SEEKING TO INVOLVE THE POPULACE IN MORE POLITICAL ACTIVITY AND DIALOGUE.

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4. WHILE WE AGREE WITH THE BRITISH EMBASSY HERE AND THE FCO THAT THERE IS AN ECONOMIC DIMENSION TO THE DISSATISFACTION AT PRESENT, THE ROOTS OF DISSIDENCE DATE BACK MANY YEARS DERIVING FROM PAST POLITICAL ALIGNMENTS AND BATTLES, AND WE DOUBT THE BRITISH ANY MORE THAN WE WOULD EXPECT THE CURE TO LIE IN ECONOMIC IMPROVEMENTS. THE SHAH'S TECHNIQUE OF CONTROLLING THE ARMY, SECURITY FORCES, MINISTRIES, AND OTHER POTENTIAL CHALLENGERS TO HIS MONARCHY INDEED RESEMBLES PARALLEL PILLARS MORE THAN A PYRAMID, BUT IT HAS WORKED PRETTY WELL FOR HIM, PARTICULARLY WHEN COMPARED WITH WHAT HAS HAPPENED IN MANY SURROUNDING COUNTRIES.

5. WHILE THE DISTURBANCES IN IRAN ARE INDEED THE WORST FOR 15 OR SO YEARS (SINCE 1962-63), THE SHAH'S METHOD OF REACTING TO THEM IS QUITE COMPLEX. EMBASSY HAS IN PREPARATION, AND WILL SOON BE SENDING, A LONGER PIECE ANALYZING SOME OF THE KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN IRAN OVER THE PAST YEAR, OUR VIEW OF THE SHAH'S AIMS AND POLICIES, AND ESTIMATES AS TO WHERE THEY MAY BE LEADING. SULLIVAN UNQUOTE VANCE

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